

# THE GREGORIAN COLLECTION

Antique Oriental Rugs of the Great Silk Route  
from Chinese Turkestan to Anatolia

An Illustrated Catalogue

*All rugs unless otherwise noted are from  
the Arthur T. Gregorian Family Collection*

Foreword by Ann Gabhart  
Director, Wellesley College Museum

Preface by Arthur T. Gregorian

Catalogue by Arthur T. Gregorian  
Phebe B. Gregorian, Joyce B. Gregorian  
and John B. Gregorian

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## FOREWORD

For many reasons the Wellesley College Museum takes special pleasure and pride in presenting the Gregorian collection of antique Oriental rugs. We are dedicated to exhibiting works of art of highest quality so that our students might experience directly the pleasures and serious rewards to be derived from them. In the Gregorian collection the visual heritage of many cultures is brought together in the single medium of rug weaving, and the group of rugs exhibited here illustrates the great range, subtlety and richness of this art.

The Gregorian family has a long history of friendship with Wellesley College and with the community. Mrs. Arthur T. Gregorian (Phebe Lynde Ballou '34) is an alumna of the College as is her mother (Grace Lynde Ballou '09) and her sister (Constance Ballou Pratt '41). One of the Gregorian's daughters, Lynda Gregorian Christian, graduated from Wellesley in 1960. A happy aspect of these close ties with the College is the decision to exhibit this major collection first in the Wellesley College Museum.

Arthur T. Gregorian, who initiated the present collection, established his business dealing in Oriental rugs in 1934. By lecturing on rugs and showing small parts of his collection at various colleges and museums throughout the country, he has done much to foster an understanding of and pleasure in these opulent works of art from his homeland. Since the establishment of his business, Mr. Gregorian from time to time has put aside those antique rugs which were particularly good examples of their types. Only in recent years has the importance of this activity become clear, with the growing difficulty in acquiring fine rugs.

The Museum is extremely grateful to this gracious and generous family for yet one more expression of friendship with Wellesley College. It is an honor to welcome their collection to our Gallery, and to anticipate the delight it will give our students and community.

Ann Gabhart, Director  
Wellesley College Museum

## PREFACE

Each rug in this collection is the result of a special combination which is the key to a real understanding not only of the rugs themselves but also of the people who make them. Each rug is the combination of the particular craftsmanship of one weaver or a group of weavers, and the inherited traditions of a particular culture. From the culture of the weaver come the ethnic tastes, abilities and limitations of material and vision which frame the weaver's personal artistry, and it is this cultural influence which is hardest for the educated Western mind to understand.

The rugs in this collection come from Chinese Turkestan, Central Asia, the Caucasus, Iran (Persia) and Anatolia. Widely divergent though they seem at first glance, there is a thread of tradition binding them together artistically, while each shows also by its liveliness and simplicity the common humanity of the various weavers.

No one knows when the art of rug weaving first developed, but the famous Pazaryk rug fragments found frozen in a grave in the Altai Mountains by Soviet archaeologists have been dated to about 500 B.C. It is a finished piece of craftsmanship, similar in artistry, material and technique to the 19th Century Qashgai rug (no. 73A) woven by a Turkic nomad of southern Iran, whose ancestors came from Central Asia centuries ago. It seems clear that the weaving of the isolated nomads of Turkestan has developed over the past 2500 years within a narrow traditional span of design and color, just as their lives have continued, until recently, to be bounded by the exigencies of sheep herding and a nomadic pastoral existence. The finest example of this can be seen in the strong family resemblance all so-called "Boukara rugs" show for each other, despite strong tribal rivalries and subtle differences of pattern and color.

Beginning in the 11th Century and continuing into the 15th Century, successive waves of Turkic speaking invaders came into Persia, the Caucasus and Anatolia, bringing with them their own traditional, primitive nomadic style of rug weaving. From a cultural base in Central Asia they influenced the artistic and literary styles of the whole middle eastern region. The Seljuks and later the Osmanlis

[Ottomans] eventually took over all of Anatolia, inheriting one of the richest storehouses of artistic tradition imaginable, including the Byzantine, Greek, Roman and Armenian cultures. Although a combination of styles was inevitable, the strong primitive art of the Seljuks has dominated Turkish taste in weaving even to the present day, with the exception of Bursa, Hercke and Constantinople where court manufactures created elegant rugs, often in silk, under royal patronage.

In the Caucasus, the invaders found a variety of ethnic groups each with a strong rug-weaving tradition of its own, Armenians, Georgians and Russians. The impact of the invaders never took precedence over the deeply rooted traditions of these conservative mountain people, although much borrowing of design can be seen, on a superficial level. All Caucasian weaving has a basic quality in common, a similarity which varies only slightly with differing ethnic tastes. However, unlike the Kazak weavers of the Caucasus, the Kazak people whose home is north of the Caucasus, and the Kazaks of Central Asia on the eastern side of the Caspian, show a large proportion of Turkic influence.

Rug weaving reached its highest technical and artistic perfection in Persia during the 17th and 18th centuries. It was recognized as being comparable to the expressions of poets and painters. And just as the art of the Persian poets and miniature painters has its roots in the Turkic culture of Central Asia, so too with the art of rug weaving. But with weaving as with other crafts, the Persian genius for intricacy and subtlety flowered so profusely that the simple, strong, primitive roots of the art are obscured. Courtly life demanded the finest carpets as gifts for kings and as decorative necessities for sophisticated living. The belief still held by some people today, that the worth of a rug can be measured in its density of knotting and of patterning stems from this courtly tradition, the reflection of Persia's age of medieval glory.

It is our belief, however, that the value of a rug lies in more than the technique of its construction. It lies in the artistic and historical statement which any such patient work of anonymous art must make to the responsive viewer, a statement of the continuing unity of human expression which underlies the fascinating multiplicity of ethnic and cultural guises.

—Arthur T. Gregorian

## 1A YARKAND

7'2" x 13'9" (218 cm x 419 cm) 18th Century

A remarkable example of influences from many Eastern cultures combined in a single rug. The yellow field coloring and extreme outer border is of Chinese influence, while the three central medallions are indigenous Turkoman concepts. The coral coloring shows the Mongolian influence, as it is a highly cherished color in the steppes to this day. The small stylized trees with blossoming branches are typically Persian and are much used by Joshegan weavers, while the potted plants between the medallions are of Seljuk origin and are used in Persia today by the Turkic-speaking Qashqais. All these motifs can be found in present-day Turkish rugs, as well as in centuries-old examples. This rug is an excellent example of the blend of culture found in Chinese Turkestan, and retains a striking simplicity despite the detail.

## 1 KASHGAR

5'8" x 7'8" (173 cm x 234 cm) 18th Century

An exquisite and colorful example of weaving from Chinese Turkestan. It is the product of Turkic-speaking people who live in western China, the ancestral homeland of those Turkic peoples who now inhabit Turkey, the Caucasus, northern Afghanistan, and parts of Persia. As you can see from this collection, almost all rugs woven by Turkic speakers, no matter what their actual geographic location, share a touch of the homeland in simplicity of design, generous use of coral red, and always a few touches of yellow. Their rugs are rarely found in large sizes.

The central design of this Kashgar is childishly simple, a representation of trees and branches. The outer borders are strongly Chinese both in color and design.

photo

## 2 YARKAND

2'9" x 9' (84 cm x 274 cm) 18th Century

This early example of weaving from Chinese Turkestan was woven as a *saph* or family prayer rug. Each prayer niche could accommodate one member of the family, and five times a day the rug was used for prayer. Once exported, however, the rug was used as a

floor covering like any other rug. This type of multiple prayer rug could be the forerunner of the *saphs* so common in recent Turkish weaving.

### 3 KASHGAR

*Pillow Cover 18th Century*

A small jewel of a rug from Chinese Turkestan, originally woven as the cover for a feather-stuffed pillow. Now its edges have been resewn and covered with velvet. The embossed effect was created by using knotted pile weaving only for the design, the background being a plain flat-weave. This is a striking example of the *gul* or flower design, which has been a basic motif for rugs and textiles in every culture.

### 4 YARKAND

*5'3" x 10'7" (160 cm x 323 cm) 19th Century*

This is a fine antique example of the favorite Pomegranate motif from Chinese Turkestan, the *naksh-i anar*. The stylized fruits are imaginatively interlocked on a field of old silver blue, with strong Chinese touches of design and color in the outer borders.

### 5 TURKOMAN TENTBAND

*1'4" x 44' (41 cm x 1341 cm) 18th Century*

This is one of the finest examples of the Turkoman tentband, and one of the oldest extant in its original, uncut length of 44 feet. This is the typical circumference of the nomadic Turkoman tent, or yurt, which has not changed over the centuries in basic design. The contrast of flat and knotted pile weaving, the delicacy of detail and color, is very much in the tradition of the Kizilayak (Red Foot) Turkomans, whose work continues to be of a superior quality even to this day.

### 6 TEKKE TURKOMAN "KHATCHLI"

*3'10" x 4'8" (117 cm x 142 cm) 19th Century*

The "Khatchli" or cross-motif Turkoman [*Khatch* is Armenian for cross, and is the name Armenian dealers gave to this type of Turkoman rug] is a type of design woven by several different Turkoman tribes. Called by them *pardeh* or curtain, it is woven to

hang in the door of the tent, doubling as a prayer rug when the need arises. This classic example woven by the Tekke Turkomans is extremely fine in weave and detail. The panels, which echo the wooden panels of the door over which it is hung, also appear like sections of a formal oriental garden. Traditionally, one end of the rug has an extra "apron" of design, while the top has a flat-woven selvage, to which the ropes for hanging were attached. Of all the various types of Turkoman weaving, the Tekke is the most intricate, finely woven and supple, as can be seen from this example.

*from a private collection*

### 7 KIZILAYAK TURKOMAN

*Horse Cover 18th Century*

This finely woven piece of early Turkoman craftsmanship is taken from a larger horse-cover. The intricacy of detail, density of pile and richness of color are all typical of Kizilayak (Red Foot) Turkomans. The flat-woven *jejim* backing is not original.

### 8 BESHIR TURKOMAN

*Boz Kashi Saddle Cover 19th Century*

This fine piece was woven to cover the small wooden saddle used by Turkoman horsemen in the fierce game of *Boz Kashi*. It is a dramatic confrontation between two mounted teams contesting possession of the carcass of a dead goat or calf. Possibly an ancestor of Polo, the game is exceedingly dangerous to horse and rider alike. Note the touch of lavender silk, probably included for good luck.

### 9 TEKKE TURKOMAN

*3'9" x 5'4" (114 cm x 163 cm) 19th Century*

This fine specimen is the product of the Tekke Turkomans of Central Asia. [*Tekke* is Turkish for monastery.] As with most Turkoman rugs, the basic motif used is the repeated *gul* or flower. The most delicately designed and detailed Turkoman *guls* are found in Tekke rugs. Also classic is the fully detailed apron of extra design at each end of the rug.



# 10 KIZILAYAK TURKOMAN "KHATCHLI"

4'4" x 5'3" (132 cm x 160 cm) 19th Century

Another Turkoman with a cross-motif (see #7) used as a *pardeh* or curtain in addition to occasional use as a prayer rug. This particular example was woven by Turkomans of the Kizilayak tribe, originally located north of the Oxus river. Today they have fled south and relocated in northern Afghanistan, where they still pursue a nomadic, pastoral life, raising sheep and weaving. As with all *pardehs*, this example has a folded-over and sewn-down selvage at the top, where it was hung in the door.

# 11 TURKOMAN BOUKARA

3' x 3'8" (91 cm x 118 cm) 19th Century

This is a good example of a Turkoman rug from the region of Boukara. The name of this famous Central Asian city has been loosely applied to all the various types of Turkoman weaving, which do have basic similarities of design and color. The yellow accents in this example are something usually found in Beshir Turkoman rugs, while the wide apron at either end employs the *gul* design of the Yomud Turkomans.

# 12 KIZILAYAK TURKOMAN

4' x 5'3" (122 cm x 160 cm) 19th Century

In this fine example of weaving from Turkoman tribes now settled in northern Afghanistan, the special quality of Turkoman wool is evident. The dark, glossy, hard-wearing wool comes from the Karakul sheep, the same type known as "Persian Lamb". Because this wool is usually dark, it is most often dyed deep tones of red, brown or black. Its luster gives the finished rug a velvet look.

# 13 YOMUD TURKOMAN

Saddlebag 2'6" x 4'2" (76 cm x 127 cm) 19th Century

Originally, this Turkoman saddlebag was one of a pair. Years ago it was cut from its mate to serve as a small rug or table cover. Because of its early use as a saddlebag, the lower plainly-woven apron (which was the back of the bag, next to the animal) sags a little. Although this piece dates from the 19th century, the delightful cocoa-red so typical of Yomud weaving is clear and unfaded.

# 14 KIZILAYAK TURKOMAN

3'8" x 5' (112 cm x 152 cm) 19th Century

This 19th century Turkoman horse-cover was apparently made for a person of some importance, to judge from the superb quality of the weaving. It was made to cover the saddle and rump of a horse, although the slit to accommodate the pommel has subsequently been sewn up. Turkoman horses are renowned to this day for their ancient pedigrees and qualities of speed and endurance, so the fineness of this splendid trapping is not surprising. A silk fringe was added to give both covering and horse an additional flair. Unquestionably, the best dyes and wools were used, for the piece has shown itself impervious to time and use.

# 15A YOMUD TURKOMAN

7' x 10'6" (213 cm x 320 cm) 18th Century

A typical Yomud rug woven in the best Turkoman tradition. The material is all wool. The background is deep mahogany reds, with a double edged comb-like *gul* design. Almost all the Boukara family of weavers use similar *guls*, the shape and size varying according to tribal tradition. This rug has a typical long, extra wide border at both ends. It was brought to Boston in 1865, and is in excellent condition today. Age has made the surface as soft and glossy as silk velvet.

from the collection of Joyce B. Gregorian

# 15 TURKOMAN

5'2" x 7'7" (157 cm x 231 cm) dated 1888

Although woven by Salor tribespeople in the vicinity of Ashkabad in Central Asia, the rug was apparently designed by, and its weaving overseen by, an Armenian master-weaver. Recently owned by an Armenian family in Istanbul, the rug when I purchased it had the inscription in its border totally dyed black. The presence of an Armenian inscription was an embarrassment and could have given the Turks reason to confiscate it at some point in the past. The inscription reads, *Badganoome Mirza Sarookhaniantz 1888*, which translates "The absolute property of the Scribe Sarookhanian." The weave is classically fine and Turkoman, but the colors show Ar-

menian taste in the use of red-orange with the plum-blue. Fineness, condition, and the Armenian inscription make it a most important rarity.

#### 16 BELOUCH

3'6" x 5' (107 cm x 152 cm) 19th Century

A very fine example of Belouch craftsmanship. It was woven by the Persian-speaking Belouchi tribespeople who live in the Khorasan province of northeastern Persia. Belouch rugs similar to this one are usually woven by those Belouchis who follow migratory ways in Afghanistan.

The deep, rich mahogany reds and browns are traditional, as is the firm hard edging. Fortunately, despite its age, this rug has both exquisitely woven selvage ends intact.

#### 17 BELOUCH PRAYER

3'3" x 4'9" (99 cm x 145 cm) 18th Century

A delightful example of Belouch weaving in the best tribal tradition. In the past Belouch rugs were confused with Boukaras because of their rich dark red and dark blue coloring. The *gul* or flower design in this rug is a little more detailed than is usual, resembling the treatment in Kurdish and Caucasian rugs. The patterns are well spaced and arranged to give a pleasant diagonal effect.

The prayer point is cleverly designed with stylized *gulal*, symbols of prosperity, on either sides of the prayer niche. Like most nomadic Belouch rugs, both ends are extended with kilim weaving, charmingly embroidered.

#### 18A BELOUCH

5'7" x 9'6" (170 cm x 290 cm) 19th Century

A superb example of the finest type of Belouch known in Central Asia, the "black" or "Yomud" Belouch. Turkoman influence is particularly noticeable in the meandering vine design of the border, a Yomud pattern much used in Anatolia as well. The repeated panels each enclosing a tree of life is typically Belouch, as are the

intricately designed selvage ends (so tightly woven they have caused the rug to pucker). Since the Belouchi people are nomadic tent-dwellers, their looms are narrow and most large rugs are made as this one was, in two separate pieces, joined together. Differences in color and pattern can be seen in the two halves, but they match remarkably well. The wool is not really black, but the tonalities of blue, red and brown are kept so close that only in the bright sun of the desert can such rugs be fully appreciated. Perhaps the most extraordinary feature of this fine rug is that many of the brightly colored accents interspersed throughout the rug are in silk, a very rare feature in Central Asian rugs. Possibly the Belouch woman who wove this rug unravelled a scarf or personal ornament to obtain the costly threads with which to embellish her creation.

*from the collection of Joyce B. Gregorian*

#### 18 BELOUCH

*Saddlebags* 19th Century

These decorative bags were woven in the 19th century to be carried by beasts of burden. The weaver has shown even more originality in these utilitarian items than is common with most rugs. They are woven in alternating bands of knotted pile and flat weave. An interesting effect is created by interweaving colored yarn with the warp and weft, while tassels and beads add further attraction. Even the backing of the bags, which rubbed against the animals, were decorated.

#### 19 KIRGHIZ KAZAK

5'8" x 6'10" (173 cm x 208 cm) 19th Century

An outstanding example of craftsmanship from the Turkic-speaking Kirghiz tribespeople of Central Asia. This was most likely woven by those Kirghiz who inhabit northern Kazakhstan. The wool is long, resilient and durable, similar to the wool from the Astrakhan sheep.

The braiding on the upper end of the rug shows this to have been used as a *pardeh* or curtain, hanging in the door of the tent. Its plain, simple, primitive design and bold coloring is symptomatic of a tribal people whose life is one long continuous struggle for existence against the elements and invaders.

*photo*

## 20 GENJI KAZAK

3'8" x 6'1" (112 cm x 185 cm) dated 1885

This Kazak rug is unquestionably the work of an Armenian. Curiously, the lettering in Armenian was woven in reverse order. The first lettering appears childish but the second group, near the bottom of the rug, is masterfully done. It is, however, the work of the same weaver.

Note how the goat which was begun at the start of the rug is left unfinished. It would have interfered with the medallion.

The first inscription reads, *Tomar Takoohi, in the year 1885*. In the lower border, it reads, *Goharik, Caucasus*.

## 21 KAZAK

5' x 7'4" (152 cm x 224 cm) 18th Century

An exciting example of nomadic weaving at its best. The design is simple and bold, the colors rich and decorative. The rug is woven with a childlike simplicity. Quickly one can sense the spontaneity and freedom enjoyed by the weaver. None of the central medallions are uniform, yet together they are a delightful design. Orange-red is a favorite color with Kazak weavers.

Like most primitive people, these weavers do not dye all the wool at one time. An interesting color variation is produced by this method of dyeing, called *abrash*.

## 22 KIRGHIZ KAZAK PRAYER

3'8" x 4' (112 cm x 122 cm) 19th Century

A very fine early example of the type of Kazak woven in Central Asia, on the Kirghiz steppe. The wool is the best obtainable from the Karakul or "Persian Lamb" sheep and the dyes are of vegetable origin. The beauty of this example lies in its extreme simplicity and the rug has the soft patina of age.

## 23 KAZAK

5'3" x 7'10" (160 cm x 239 cm) 19th Century

A striking example of the bold, primitive type of Kazak woven in

Central Asia. Most likely this is a product of the Kirghiz tribes, who love simple design and strong colors. The use of coral, orange and green forms a link with their ancestors from Chinese Turkestan. Time has softened the bright colors and brought to the wool the rich patina of age.

photo

## 24 KUBA KAZAK

5' x 7'3" (152 cm x 221 cm) 19th Century

An excellent example of bold Kuba weaving from the northern Caucasus. The rug has the carefree rhythm of the riders of the mountainous country. The weaver had difficulty in keeping the colors and design uniform. Especially at the beginning, the brown wool was gathered from any available source, and time has shown that the quality was uneven, since this area has worn more than the rest. The outer border design in ivory also posed a continuing challenge to the primitive weaver. As a result of these and other irregularities the rug makes a remarkable tribute to the artistic soul of these migratory people who live from day to day dependent on their flocks and pasturage.

## 25 GENJI KAZAK (Armenian)

3'10" x 8'3" (117 cm x 251 cm) dated 1888

A fine piece of Caucasian weaving, using firm heavy mountain wool, which gives it the thick texture of more northern Kazaks. It is however not so bold as those from Central Asia. Geometrical in spirit, it employs a series of medallions for the main motif, with the afterthought of small goats woven into all but the first medallion. Not all Genji Kazaks are Armenian, but this example is inscribed with the Armenian weaver's name and the date.

The inscription reads on one side, *Nubar Gregor Bagdasariantz 1888*, *Marian 1888* on the other, and the word *aghuh* or salt (symbolizing baptism) also appears in the border. That the rug commemorates an important event is clear, but whether of weaving, birth or marriage cannot be ascertained.

photo

## 26 KAZAK

4'5" x 8'7" (135 cm x 262 cm) Early 19th Century

This is an exquisite example of a primitive Kazak whose bold colors have mellowed with time. The terra cotta red medallions on the chambray blue field have unusually delicate checkerboard insets, almost like fine tile designs. The typical Kazak scarab pattern in the border and on the field are done with a precision and uniformity not common in Kazak weaving.

## 27 KAZAK

3' x 5' (91 cm x 152 cm) 19th Century

A Kazak woven in the spirit of Daghestan and Cabistan weavers. It is most unusual for a Kazak to use such small, over-all motifs. Notice the four childishly depicted goats which the weaver introduced just before completing the rug.

photo

## 28 KAZAK

3'8" x 6'1" (112 cm x 185 cm) dated 1818

This is a simply designed, early example of the type of Kazak woven by Armenians near Lake Sevan. Dated 1818, it is in excellent condition with some slight restoration done years ago. The restraint shown in both colors and design are typical of the Armenian Kazaks, traditionally less primitive than those from further north.

## 29 KUBA

4'8" x 11'2" (142 cm x 340 cm) 18th Century

This is a classic early example of weaving from the Kuba area of the Caucasus. The rug has seen considerable use and has been restored in many places: recently both ends were rewoven. The design is of the type most often called "Caucasian Dragon". It resembles closely the type of double-headed rooster often used in the Caucasian region as a symbol to ward off bad luck, although in terms of art history it may well date back to the ancient Chinese symbol of dragon and phoenix intertwined, a fertility motif often misinterpreted as two animals fighting. As other rugs in this collection show, much of the symbolism and color of rugs in Western Asia can be traced to Central Asia or even further east.

## 30 BAKU

5' x 15' (152 cm x 457 cm) 19th Century

This rug was woven on the Caspian seacoast sometime during the last century. Baku has an interesting mixture of Armenians, Georgians, Russians, Azeri Turks, Tatars and many other ethnic groups. Consequently the weaver has managed to combine several different racial feelings and yet has created a harmonious composition. As with the work of most independent weavers, the rug has a personality all its own.

## 31 TALISH KARABAGH

3'7" x 7'4" (109 cm x 224 cm) 18th Century

A fine example showing the relationship between the best of Caucasian design and color and that of Chinese Turkestan. At a quick glance one would think that the rug had been woven in Chinese Turkestan because of its generous use of old blue and the orange-touched disc pattern in the border, so reminiscent of the old Khotan rugs. The delicate treatment of detail is typically Caucasian, however.

More than a hundred years ago, the right-hand border was completely restored. Although the reweaving was done very well, time has aged these newer colors differently from the original.

photo

## 32 KARABAGH

3'9" x 6'4" (114 cm x 193 cm) 19th Century

The floral design central to this 19th century rug is a motif alien to the Caucasus. Referred to as *Gul-i Ferangi* or "foreign flower" by native weavers, it is an adaptation of the European designs introduced into the Caucasus through Russia, and to a lesser extent by the Feridun Armenians in Bachtari land during the 19th century. These designs were never well accepted, as they were not suited to the weavers of geometric rugs. Fortunately, this type of motif has almost completely disappeared from weaving today.

### 33 SHIRVAN

4' x 7' (122 cm x 213 cm) 19th Century

An early example of traditional Shirvan weaving, lightly restored in the central section. Despite the apparent ease of the simple design, the usual problem of bringing the border pattern around the corners was experienced. This is especially noticeable at the lower left. Classic Caucasian motifs, combs, goats, and grazing animals, fill in the field about the main medallions.

### 34 SHIRVAN

4' x 9'2" (122 cm x 279 cm) 18th Century

This Shirvan has a strong likeness to rugs from Chinese Turkestan with its generous use of gold and coral. It is, however, more playful with a Caucasian love for random details. The ends have been restored.

### 35 KAZAK PRAYER

3'10" x 5'6" (117 cm x 168 cm)

*dated 1396 A.H. (about 1899 A.D.)*

This is a most unusual example of Kazak weaving from Central Asia. In the upper right border, just above the date, there is portrayed the triangular silver pendant which Turkoman and Asiatic Kazak women wear for good luck. The date below is virtually illegible, having been portrayed by an illiterate weaver: a possible reading is 1396, about 1899 A.D. Unlike most prayer rugs, this was woven from the bottom up. A line of stars was left unfinished when the central panel was started. Perhaps the weaver only decided to make a prayer rug at the last moment. This would account for the unusually small prayer niche and the reverse of normal weaving direction. Many classic motifs are attempted: several combs, an incompleting tree of life and a ewer. Notice how charmingly primitive the central diamond-shaped motifs are, the upper ones distorted with their "latch-hooks" turned inside out.

### 36 TALISH KARABAGH

3'6" x 8' (107 cm x 244 cm) 18th Century

A rare early example of weaving from the Caspian seacoast. The long narrow proportions are traditional, but the starlike field design echoes the motifs of neighboring Daghestan and Cabistan weavers. Both ends have been restored.

### 37 SHIRVAN

3'5" x 5'10" (104 cm x 178 cm) 19th Century

Three bold, jewel-like medallions give the rug a sharp Caucasian feeling. The red in the top medallion has been completely restored. Note how much larger that medallion is than the lower one. The small star motif on the blue field is childishly delightful.

### 38 CABISTAN PRAYER RUG

3'5" x 4'3" (104 cm x 130 cm)

*dated 1201 A.H. (about 1785 A.D.)*

A rare piece of craftsmanship. The main figure is a royal personage, to judge from his crown and jewelled sword. There are delicate touches of lavender silk on the horse and rider. If the other animal is meant to be a deer, the story illustrated is probably that of Bahram Gur, the famous Persian huntsman. The portrayal is delightfully childish and primitive in spirit. It is interesting to compare the awkward treatment of the "realistic" figures with the easy grace of the more natural stick figure animals which are included wherever space permits. The date in the upper corner is 1201 A.H., about 1785 A.D.

*photo*

### 39 KAZAK

3' x 5'5" (91 cm x 165 cm) 18th Century

An outstandingly spontaneous and well-preserved early Kazak. This charming rug typifies the boldness of color, simplicity of pattern and unselfconsciousness of design which are the hallmarks of a great Kazak rug. The date is illegible, as is often the case with inscriptions woven by illiterate weavers. No part of the pattern is

consistently repeated within the rug; motifs change, are left uncompleted, new colors are added as old dyes are exhausted. In the center a small animal, perhaps a goat, stands squarely on four stick legs. This Kazak is a classic example of unspoiled folk-art.

from the John B. Gregorian Family Collection

photo

#### 40 CABISTAN PRAYER

3'4" x 4'4" late 19th Century

An exquisite 19th century example which uses a small rendering of the *naksh-i anar* or pomegranate design as its main motif. The fourth and fifth rows from the bottom show a departure from this tree and fruit pattern; obviously the idea did not meet with approval as it was not continued. The generous use of small stars which is so noticeable in the middle of the rug was also discarded. These changes of taste, even to the addition of two 6-legged goats, only add to the rug's charm.

photo

#### 41 CABISTAN PRAYER

3'10" x 4'10" (117 cm x 147 cm) 18th Century

The ivory field of this exceedingly fine rug is covered with small, conventionalized trees, each with two extended leaves and one or more fruits on top. They are arranged so that a diagonal effect of stripes will be created. Unusual in this type of rug are the touches of silk. Both in craftsmanship and in design, this is one of the finest examples of rugs from the Caucasus. Note how artistically the multiple borders frame and set off the field.

from the John B. Gregorian Family Collection

photo

#### 42 GEORGI

2'8" x 3'6" (81 cm x 107 cm) 19th Century

A charmingly simple, classically Caucasian rug from Georgia. Despite the strongly European culture of the area, the rug is primitive and unaffected. The shape and the placement of design is haphazard, the colors change with differing dye-lots, and the rug

itself is crooked along the edges. The weave however is extremely fine and close, and the wool silky. Notice how much the outer, diamond-shaped medallions with their rim of "latch-hooks" resemble the classic guls of Yomud Turkoman weaving. (no. 15A)

#### 43 CABISTAN PRAYER

3'9" x 4'10" (114 cm x 147 cm) 19th Century

A classical 19th century example of the type of weaving common to several Caucasian areas, including the Shirvan, Derebend and Chichi Cabistan types. These are all quite similar with only slight differences in use of color and design. The style of weaving is especially consistent among the three types.

photo

#### 44 DERE BEND

4'6" x 5'5" (137 cm x 165 cm) 19th Century

This rug was woven during the 19th century on the Caspian seacoast in Derebend, a city of the Caucasus. North and south of Derebend, down the seacoast as far as Talish, the weavers show a strong love of blue as in this example. Against this color, the star-like medallions are delightfully designed. The smaller ones are cleverly woven according to space available. Note how the two end medallions were compressed, either from lack of room or impatience to complete the rug.

photo

#### 45 CHICHI CABISTAN

4'4" x 5'3" (132 cm x 160 cm) 19th Century

As is typical with most Cabistan rugs from the Caucasus, the weave is fine and the texture thin. The central interlacing of design gives the effect of latticework, a pattern used also in the carving of wooden shutters and for general use in architectural detailing. Despite this delicacy of treatment, the rug is thoroughly Caucasian in spirit.



#### 46 SHIRVAN

3'10" x 5'4" (117 cm x 163 cm) 19th Century

Two bold medallions with a central scarab-like design give this 19th century Shirvan a bold appearance. Small eight-pointed rosettes cover the dark-blue field, increasing in density towards the finish. In the outer ivory border, there is a double-edged comb with the design of a rooster. To this day in Central Asia and in the Caucasus, double-sided combs are made with similar playful decorations (the rooster helps to ward off evil spirits). Note the touch of strong red used to start the rug.

#### 47 CABISTAN

3'7" x 5'3" (109 cm x 160 cm) 18th Century

The main pattern is Caucasian using the Saraband design. The field is made interesting by the playful use of little animals and trees to fill out the empty spaces. Every motif is similar in shape, but no two are of the same size. The designs are diagonally arranged as well. Miniature ewers, double-edged combs, an isolated goat and a falcon all help to make the field around the niche more interesting.

#### 48 GHIORDES PRAYER

4'10" x 6'10" (147 cm x 208 cm) 18th Century

A rare example of Ghiordes weaving in the finest classical sense. The blending of simple design with delicate colors gives the rug a dignity and quality only a master craftsman can conceive and complete. The inner field is plain with small lily-like motifs protruding into the field. At the base of the field design there are vases with stylized flowers. In the lower oblong cartouche and in the field above the prayer point, the weaver has interestingly interpreted the Persian fish pattern, exaggerating the scales and grouping the fishes in threes. Persian weavers always use the fishes in pairs. The two main borders and the inner border of the prayer field are composed of stylized plants. The seven-stripe middle border, alternating ivory and deep brown, is a characteristic of Ghiordes weaving. The ivory is traditionally cotton. Notice the delightful inverted potted plant in the prayer point.

photo



1 KASHGAR 18th Century 5'8" x 7'8" (173 cm x 234 cm)



19 KIRGHIZ KAZAK 19th Century 5'8" x 6'10"  
(173 cm x 208 cm)



23 KAZAK 19th Century 5'3" x 7'10" (160 cm x 239 cm)





25 GENJI KAZAK (Armenian) Dated 1888 3'10" x 8'3"  
(117 cm x 251 cm)



27 KAZAK 19th Century 3' x 5' (91 cm x 152 cm)



31 TALISH KARABAGH 18th Century 3'7" x 7'4"  
(109 cm x 224 cm)



38 CABISTAN PRAYER RUG Dated 1201 A.H. (about 1785 A.D.)  
3'5" x 4'3" (104 cm x 130 cm)



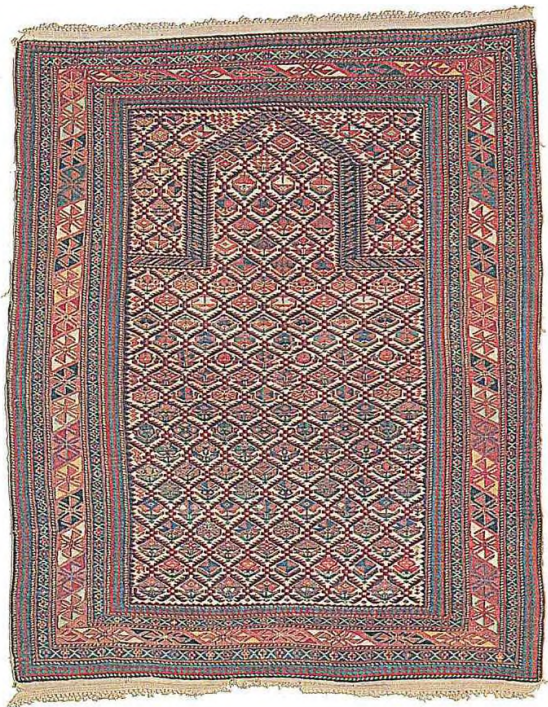


39 KAZAK 18th Century 3' x 5'5" (91 cm x 165 cm)



40 CABISTAN PRAYER late 19th Century 3'4" x 4'4"





41 CABISTAN PRAYER 18th Century 3'10" x 4'10"  
(117 cm x 147 cm)

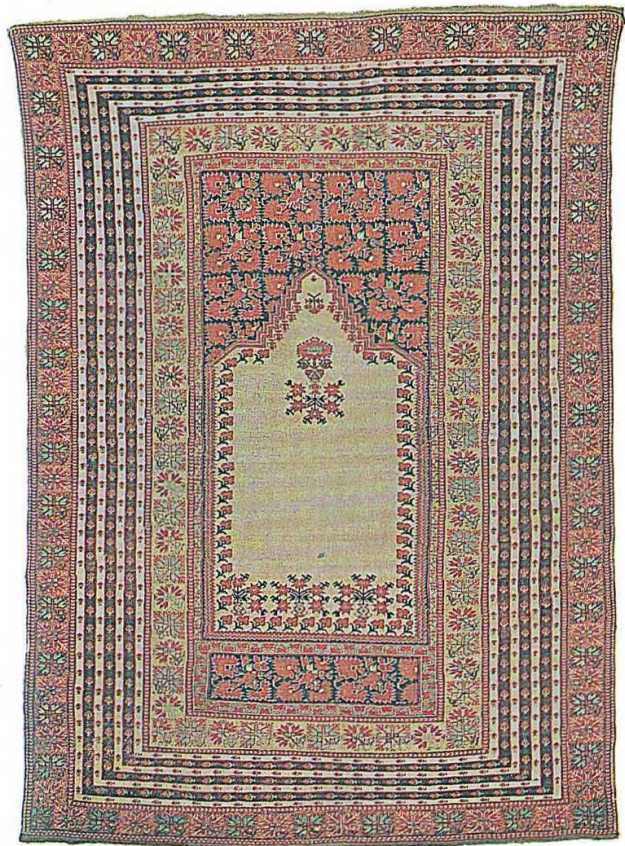


43 CABISTAN PRAYER 19th Century 3'9" x 4'10"  
(114 cm x 147 cm)



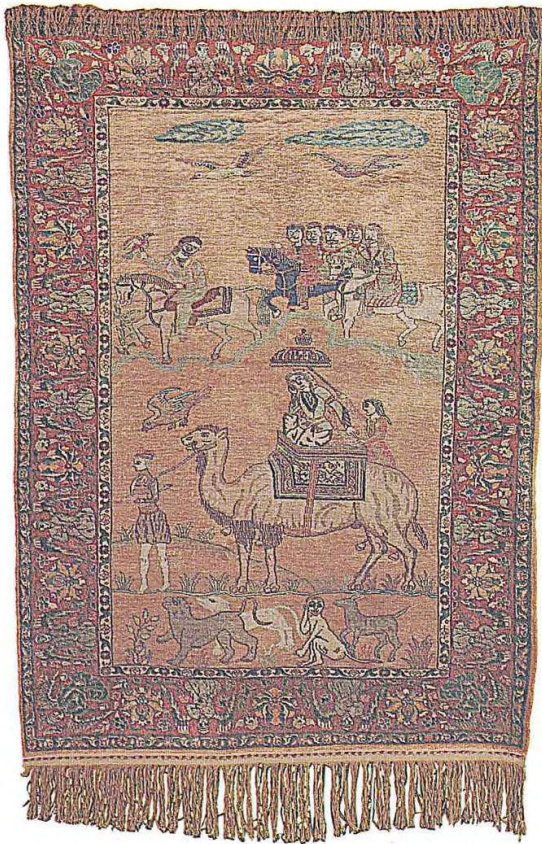


44 DEREBEND 19th Century 4'6" x 5'5" (137 cm x 165 cm)



48 GHIORDES PRAYER 18th Century 4'10" x 6'10"  
(147 cm x 208 cm)



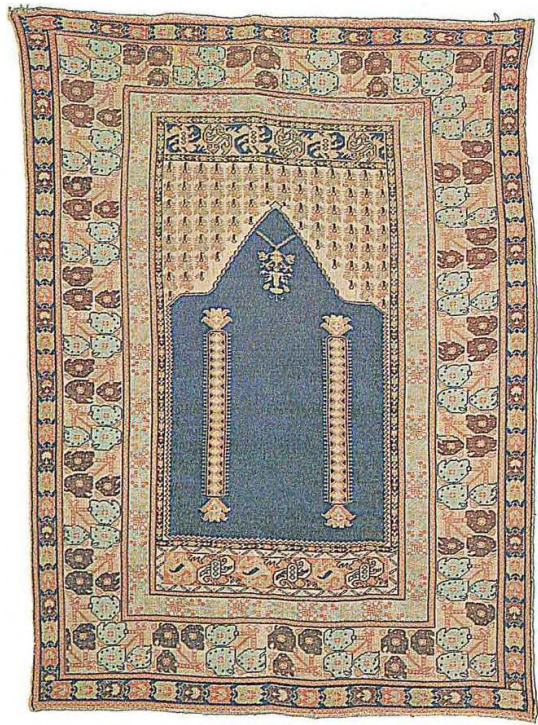


52 KAYSERI SILK 19th Century 4' x 5'8" (122 cm x 173 cm)



53 HEREKE SILK 19th Century 3'5" x 5'2" (104 cm x 157 cm)





57 KULA 18th Century 4'3" x 5'9" (130 cm x 175 cm)



59 ARDABIL 18th Century 4'8" x 6'10" (142 cm x 208 cm)

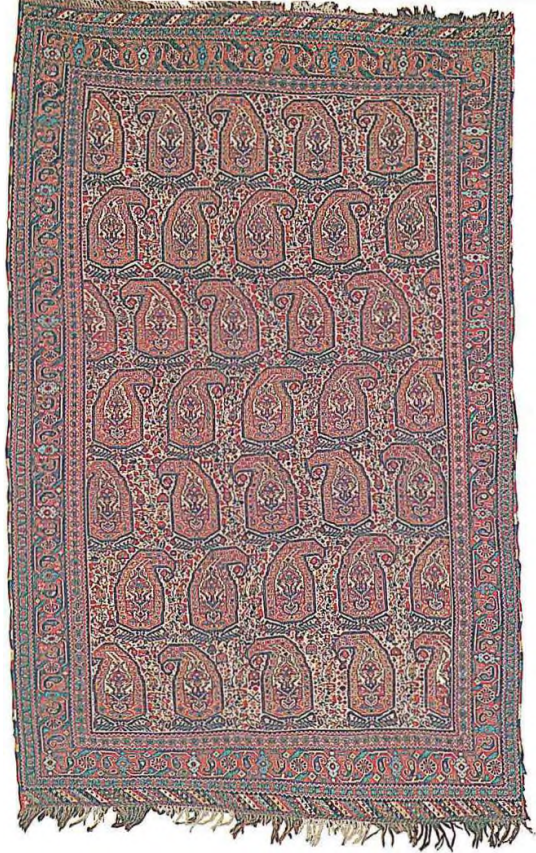


62 AFSHAR 19th Century 4'4" x 5'10" (132 cm x 178 cm)



73A QASHQAI (SHIRAZ) 19th Century 4'2" x 7'6" (127 cm x 229 cm)

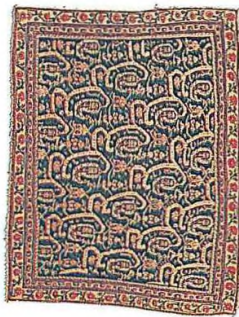




73 QASHQAI 19th Century 4'9" x 7'9" (145 cm x 236 cm)



75A SENNA 19th Century 3'5" x 5' (104 cm x 152 cm)

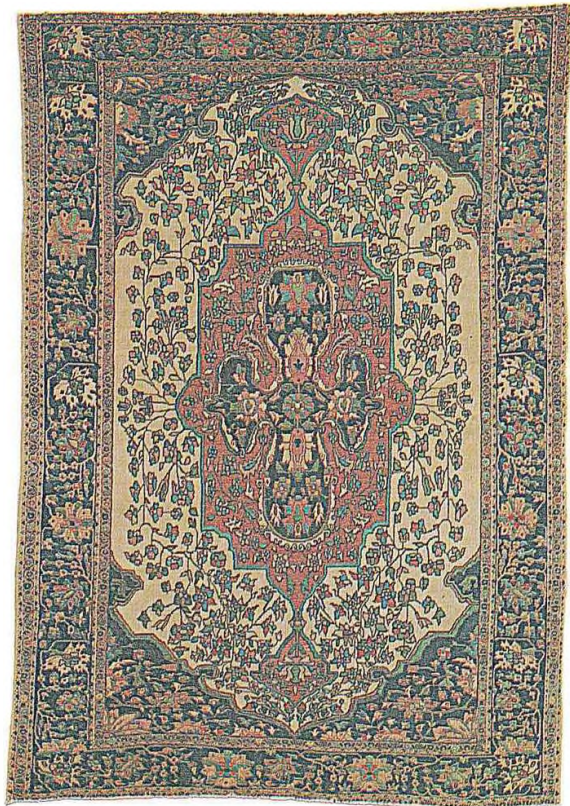


75B SENNA 19th Century  
2'3" x 3' (69 cm x 91 cm)



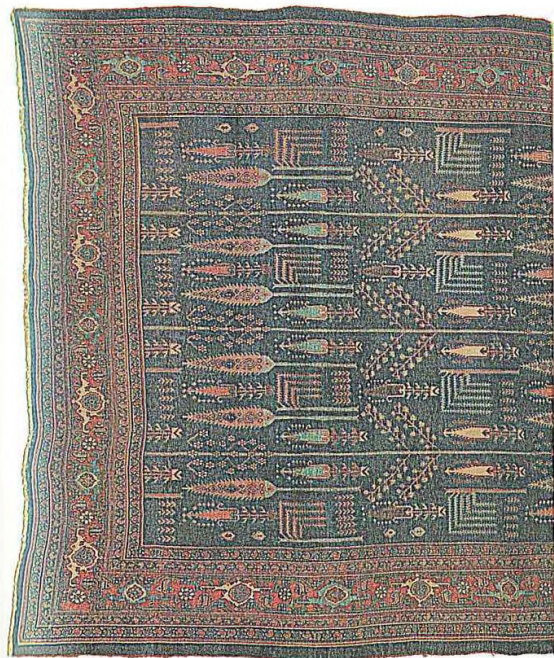
75C SENNA 19th Century  
1'10" x 3'2" (56 cm x 97 cm)





79 SAROUK Early 19th Century 4'6" x 6'6"  
(137 cm x 198 cm)

from the collection of Dr. Wesley W. Washburn



83 BIDJAR 18th Century 8' x 11'7" (244 cm x 353 cm)



89 KESHAN—SILK & SILVER 19th Century 4'6" x 7'9"  
(137 cm x 236 cm)

#### 49A KOMARLU KULA

4'6" x 6' (137 cm x 183 cm) 18th Century

This exquisite example of Kula weaving features use of lemon yellow. The field is a rich dark brown, against which the light blue and touches of turquoise stand out in contrast, enhancing the richness of the background color. The word *Komarlu* means coal black, and is used to describe these rugs because of the darkness of the field. The upper and lower borders were restored more than a hundred years ago. As the rug faded, the repaired sections became more apparent. At either end of the field there is a potted plant from which spring flowers that are cleverly blended with the rest of the design. The treatment of the border against the lemon yellow is superb.

#### 49 KIRSHIR PRAYER

4' x 4'10" (122 cm x 147 cm) 18th Century

This delicate, almost fragile old prayer rug has a beauty today which is the result of a master craftsman's designing, planning and workmanship more than two hundred years ago, and the mellowing of time. Fortunately this rug has been preserved from the destructive forces of wear, dirt, and moths for the past thirty-five years that it has been in my collection. Before that it saw many years of service in the use for which it was intended—as a prayer rug for a devout Muslim to use five times a day for prayer. The wear of the faithful's knees and toes left their marks and repairs were made in these spots years ago. At some period it evidently suffered other abuse, for further repairs have been done, probably once cleverly matched to the original colors, but now faded to shades very different. In general the rug is in excellent condition, with only two blue borders actually missing, one at each end of the rug.

#### 50 KAYSERI SILK

4'3" x 5'6" (130 cm x 168 cm) 17 Century

This is a rare Kayseri silk rug with two narrow borders and about a third of the main border missing. There are a few splits and sev-



eral torn places. However, in spite of its age and worn condition, the rug glows like a jewel. There is a freshness in the colors. The medallion makes decorative use of candelabras which are much used in Turkish prayer rugs. The simple floral decorations within the triangles of the main rug field are favorites to this day in Turkish embroideries and pottery designs. The main border has touches of Samarand and Persian influences but the coloring is typically Turkish. The turtle is used, alternating with rosettes which, in reality, are stylized turtles, too. Each rosette is surrounded by two fishes, but they are placed head to head instead of in the Persian concept which always shows them chasing each other around the rosette. The rug is a delightful example of Seljuk boldness superimposed on a delicately conceived design.

#### 51 KONYA SILK PRAYER

4' x 5'2" (122 cm x 157 cm) 18th Century

A rare and early example of weaving from Konya, the ancient Iconium. A large mosque lamp is the central motif of this prayer rug, with candelabras on either side. The light blue borders are woven in a mosque dome design. As is the case with most antique Turkish prayer rugs, the rug was woven from the top of the prayer niche down. Towards the end the weaver ran out of both light blue and red, and had to make do with silk of different color and quality. Time has heightened these color differences (*abrash*) which only serve to make the rug more interesting, as well as proving it to be the product of an individual family.

#### 52 KAYSERI SILK

4' x 5'8" (122 cm x 173 cm) 19th Century

In this fine silk rug, a lady of royal lineage is shown being led to the hunt with guards and falconers. They are following a river and overhead, beneath a pair of cloud bands rendered in a Far Eastern style, exotic birds are flying. To add to the strangeness of the scene, rare animals are depicted on the lower level. Although human and animal figures were very rarely shown in Turkish art, the fact that this scene was drawn in a blend of Chinese and Persian styles accounts for the discrepancy. The warp is of cotton and linen; the pile is pure silk.

photo

#### 53 HERKE SILK

3'5" x 5'2" (104 cm x 157 cm) 19th Century

For many years, the weavers of Hereke were honored as the official weavers to the court in Istanbul, and their rugs such as this 19th century silk were signed in one corner with the word "Hereke" written in Arabic. This exquisite and unusual example depicts a typically Persian scene, horsemen playing polo in a *maidan* or square, most likely the famous field in Isfahan, where goal-posts similar to those in the rug still stand. Only the warm colors are typically Turkish; the design itself is modelled on the idea of a Persian miniature, with different levels to represent perspective. The drummers shown kept beat to the game in progress.

photo

#### 54A SIVAS

4'2" x 5'3" (127 cm x 160 cm) 18th Century

An excellent example of Seljuk art, this rug has a field of Turkey red with some yellows. The border design is a series of poppy-like flowers which are delightfully interwoven. However, we can see the struggle that the weaver had to achieve the shape of the flowers if we look at the lower border where the weaver began. Other problems arose with the dyeing of the color for the main field of the rug. The lower, outside border is missing, otherwise the rug is in unusually fine condition.

#### 54 AVANOZ

4'2" x 6' (127 cm x 183 cm) 19th Century

A 19th century example of Anatolian weaving. It is rich in the colors of peasant craftsmanship, retaining as do most Anatolian rugs a touch of the boldness of early Seljuk art.

#### 55 SIVAS

3'9" x 6' (114 cm x 183 cm) 19th Century

A fine example of Anatolian weaving, related to the Avanoz and Yahyali rugs in this collection. It is bold and colorful which is much in keeping with the art of the isolated, primitive people who

weave in Anatolia. The Seljuk tradition is still alive in their crafts. The wide outer border of red, however, is probably the result of Persian influence. Also typically Persian is the *naksh-i badam* or almond (paisley) design. Yet the arrangement of the long oblong medallions harks back to the arts of Chinese Turkestan, and the ancestral beginnings of the Turkish peoples.

#### 56 YAHYALI

3'10" x 5'2" (117 cm x 157 cm) 19th Century

This rug is of a similar Turkic background to the Sivas and Avanoz rugs in this collection. (See nos. 54 and 55.) Most Anatolian rugs, when new, have a very strong definition of color, but time mellows the dyes. Even when threadbare, however, the colors will still have a marked vibrancy. The wool of Yahyali is especially lustrous.

#### 57A AVANOZ PRAYER

3'10" x 5' (117 cm x 152 cm) 18th Century

A rare, early example of weaving from eastern Anatolia. It is a simple, village type of rug made with the best of local wool and dyes. Generations of use as a prayer rug has worn the field, especially where the hands and knees touched it, in addition to later wear from ordinary use on the floor. For a rug of such age the colors are amazingly clear and fast. The strong lavender is especially striking, since in many cases it fades to a weak tea color. The Central Asiatic background of the weavers of Anatolia can be seen in their heritage of color: green, strong yellow and persimmon red.

#### 57 KULA

4'3" x 5'9" (130 cm x 175 cm) 18th Century

This is a rare Kula in perfect condition, a classical example of 18th century weaving. It is primitive in its design interpretation but most effective. Note the simple delineation of a tree with three small branches and three leaves. At the top of the blue field is a decorative mosque lamp and two oversize candelabra stands. The blue field was entirely restored about fifty to seventy-five years ago.

photo

#### 58 SERAB

4' x 15'4" (122 cm x 467 cm) 18th Century

This early Serab is one of the most interesting and primitive examples of its type. It was woven in a village at the foot of Mount Savalan, in the Azerbaijan province of Persia. The pattern used, *naksh-i badam* or "almond design" is common in the local *suzanni* or needlework, but infrequently used in rugs. In this case the weaver obviously intended a diagonal symmetry, and in order to achieve this every other row of design used two full and two half motifs. Despite the apparent uniformity no two motifs are quite the same in size or shape. The cheerful color combinations are especially exciting.

#### 59 ARDABIL

4'8" x 6'10" (142 cm x 208 cm) 18th Century

This rug could very easily be mistaken for a Tabriz rug. It is however one of the best early examples of weaving from Ardabil. The simple, primitive floral pattern in the center is on the same cultural level as most rural weavers in this area, with a further similarity to Tabriz design in the border. However, the treatment is somewhat more geometrical than one would expect to find in a true Tabriz. Both ends of this rug, to a depth of about one and one-half inches, have been completely restored.

photo

#### 60 SERAB

3'6" x 12' (107 cm x 366 cm) 18th Century

Woven sometime in the 18th century in a small village at the foot of Mount Savalan, northeast of Tabriz, this old Serab shows an exquisite blending of color and design. The design is more balanced than is usual in multi-medallion rugs, the center one being larger and in good proportion to the end ones. The tan field is of camel wool, while the various dark shades of brown in the border were obtained from the rinds of walnuts. The indiscriminate use of designs all over the field shows the weaver's marked independence. About an inch of the lower border was restored about seventy-five

years ago. The dyes in this wool were not so firmly set as in the original, and this more recent wool has faded. Where the dark browns have recessed it is the result of oxidation, common in old examples of wool dyed with iron pyrites.

#### 61 MESHKIN

2'3" x 3'8" (69 cm x 112 cm) 19th Century

This small rug is the remaining half of a pair of saddlebags woven in the northern Azerbaijan near the Caucasian border. Thousands of such examples were imported into New England through seaport towns before 1900. Virtually every home with Oriental rugs had one or more examples of this type, usually referred to erroneously as "Kurdish rugs". The feeling of the design is Caucasian, but the coloring is Central Asiatic.

#### 62 AFSHAR

4'4" x 5'10" (132 cm x 178 cm) 19th Century

Woven about 1850, this rug is a product of the Al-Saadi Afshar tribes, who settled in the area south of Kerman although they originated in the Persian Azerbaijan. They are Turkic speaking, and their rugs like most nomadic creations are all wool. The dyes are vegetable derivatives, and the yarn was hand spun. In some of their rugs only one medallion is used, and the vases have stylized flowers in them: this example has an empty vase at either end. Most rugs of this family show a strong use of coral and blue. In color and design there is a marked resemblance to the rugs woven in Kashgar by the Turkic peoples of Chinese Turkestan. Like many Central Asiatic rugs, this rug has an extra border of design at either end. Note the primitive treatment of stylized barnyard animals.

*photo*

#### 63 SHAH SEVAN

4'7" x 8'3" (140 cm x 251 cm) 19th Century

The Shah Sevan ("Lovers of the Shah") tribes are a Turkic-speaking people located throughout the Azerbaijan. Although the medallions and basic design treatment is similar to that of the Soumak

weavers in the Caucasus, the rug has a strongly primitive feeling and is very playful, especially in the field. The weaving of this rug finished at the top and one can see how much fresher the "new" end is than the beginning section.

#### 64 BACHTIARI

3'3" x 13'9" (99 cm x 419 cm) 18th Century

This is another unusual treatment of the *badam* (almond nut) design used by an imaginative Bachtuari weaver for both the field and the main border design. Migratory weavers use this pattern rather casually and without too much effort on perfection of design. There is generous use of gold and touches of turquoise. The outer narrow border is composed of a series of falcon-like birds. The ends of the rug are finished with a band of embroidered kilim weaving.

#### 65 QASHQAI

4'9" x 7'5" (145 cm x 226 cm) 19th Century

This rug was woven in the 19th century by the Safi Kani tribe, which numbers less than 200 families. It is one of the smallest of Qashqai tribes, and like the others is Turkic-speaking. Although as a tribe they do not enjoy a good personal reputation among their kindred tribespeople, the Safi Kani people do make one of the finest type of Qashqai rug. The wool is all hand-spun, and the dyes are vegetable derivatives, with delightful blends of color. The design, of diamond-shaped medallions linked at the center by a tree or pole is classically Qashqai. Roosters, a symbol used to ward off evil spirits, cover the entire rug in an imaginative variety of shapes and sizes.

#### 66 QASHQAI

6'4" x 12'10" (193 cm x 391 cm) 18th Century

This earlier fragile example combines medallions in such a pleasing fashion that it may be enjoyed for the blend of color and design from any angle. There is a scattering of roosters and chickens throughout the rug, and in one of the medallions there stands what seems to be the childish representation of a lion, part of the Persian



coat of arms. The Qashqai weavers show their Central Asian origins in the powerful use of such colors as green, coral and orange. Even a rug such as this, old and threadbare, commands respect and appreciation.

#### 67 KERMAN

4'7" x 4'6" (140 cm x 137 cm) 19th Century

A striking example of Kerman weaving, using the famous Persian "Vase motif". Often in larger rugs this design is repeated over and over with the flowers assuming prominence in the patterning. In this example the vase itself is the major part of the design. A *jungal* or forest-like atmosphere is created by the turning of the flowers, and this effect is deepened by the two small deer woven at the base of the rug.

Such a generous use of gold in a Kerman rug is most unusual. The roses and nightingales which play such a part in the poetry of Persia are gracefully designed throughout.

from the collection of Dr. Edmund Piper

#### 68 "RAHVAR" KERMAN

7'10" x 9'7" (239 cm x 292 cm) 19th Century

Most of the so-called "Laver" Kermans sold the world over are actually from Rahvar, a village north of the city of Kerman. Someone made the original error and the meaningless name "Laver" was picked up and carried from book to book, from authority to authority. Strangely enough, Rahvar rugs are not superior to those actually made in Kerman, and today as in the past they are held in slightly less esteem within Iran, than an actual Kerman. Rahvar rugs strongly resemble other Kermans with two major exceptions. The floral designs are treated in a more childish and stylized way than would be true in Kerman, and a strong preference for different shades of blue is always noticeable. The inscription on this fine example reads, *Ata'ulla Shavanjian*.

#### 69 SAROUK

4'9" x 6'7" (145 cm x 201 cm) 19th Century

Sarouk is a small isolated village, numbering only a few hundred families. It is accessible by a dirt road which does not go beyond the village. The main town in the area is Arak (Sultanabad). This early 19th century rug is an extremely fine example of the attempt by a village craftsman to work with a sophisticated floral motif. There is a touch of childishness in the way the design is handled. Since the wool was dyed locally in small lots, there is a marked change of color (*abrash*) in the blue field. Towards the end of the rug the weaver apparently had to borrow a small lot of ready-dyed wool to complete his rug. Time has shown this batch to have been of inferior quality, as it has worn more quickly than the rest.

#### 70 KHORASSAN

4' x 6' (122 cm x 183 cm) 18th Century

An exquisite example of Khorassan weaving. The field coloring is bright copper red, a typical Khorassan color. Originally it was probably a much deeper red, but with time the color has softened, exposing small batches of wool of different texture from the main body of wool used in the rug. For some reason this small amount absorbed the dye differently and held the color longer, which has created the variation in color which the Persians call *abrash*. Khorassan rugs are woven differently from any other Oriental rug. The weaver starts the rug and makes from four to six rows of knots without a weft thread between each row or with a fine one almost like a single thread. Then the weaver uses a very heavy weft thread, and continues this process for the whole rug. A true product of a weaver from Khorassan province, like this rug, shows on the back of the rug these heavy threads every four to six rows.

Some of the finest and largest rugs in the world are woven in the Province and all are sold as Khorassan rugs, although they are actually made in particular areas or around certain cities. This particular rug was woven near Nishapur. Others are made near Birjand, Gayin and other ancient centers of Persian art and culture.

# 71 BIDJAR

2'9" x 4'3" (84 cm x 130 cm) 19th Century

This small rug was woven by Kurds in the town of Bidjar, in the Azerbaijan province of Persia. It is similar to no. 75. The weathered coral red field shows the trials and tribulations suffered by the weaver during the process of completion. Since cotton was scarce in the old days, this rug like most 19th century Bidjars has a wool warp and weft.

Bidjars and Sennas are the most famous type of rug woven by Kurds. Their color schemes were always heavily influenced by Tabriz, with coral reds, light and dark blues, occasional yellow and generous amounts of contrasting ivory predominating.

# 72 CHAHAL SHOTOR BACHTIARI

Saddlebags 18th Century

Some of the finest weaving done in Bachtari land is from the "Chahal Shotor" or "Forty Camels" tribes. Woven in the 18th century, the scraps which make these bags have been used and used hard. As they wore out under abuse they were cut down in size and reinforced with leather. Now although only small pieces of the original remain, the wool and the colors still sparkle.

# 73A QASHQAI (SHIRAZ)

4'2" x 7'6" (127 cm x 229 cm) 19th Century

This rug with its delightful blend of nomadic ideas has a freshness and beauty that only an unspoiled weaver can create. The spirited horse is full of action and the noble horseman is travelling with all his trappings. Notice the umbrella to protect him from the harsh elements. It also indicates that he is a person of some consequence. The generous use of gold is an indication that the weavers are of Turkic origin. The use of cypress trees, however, is more common to the neighboring tribes of Bachtariis than to the Qashqais. The extra end borders are typically Turkoman. That the ancestors of the Qashqai weavers came from Central Asia is made clear by the various design elements in this rug.

from the collection of Joyce B. Gregorian

photo

# 73 QASHQAI

4'9" x 7'9" (145 cm x 236 cm) 19th Century

An excellent example of Qashqai tribal weaving using Persia's famous *naksh-i badam* or almond design. The weaver has shown imagination in the creating with the *badam* a small tree-like motif with extending branches. The extra band on both ends is in the style of Central Asian weavers. The multi-colored edging is original. The ivory field is well covered with interesting detail giving the background a lace-like composition.

photo

# 74 SOUJ-BOULAK

5' x 12'2" (152 cm x 371 cm) 19th Century

A rare example of Kurdish weaving ranking with the two other best known rugs from this area, the Senna and the Bidjar. The wool has been soaked in strong vegetable dyes and the uneven results show in the interesting variations in the colors. The natural dyes, combined with the lanolin-rich wool, give the rug a brilliance hard to imitate. The greens are of an extraordinary quality. The Saraband design is unusual but a good choice for the weaver in this area. The scalloping of the long rusty red medallion frames the Saraband design against the green background with its scattering of small barnyard animals.

# 75A SENNA

3'5" x 5' (104 cm x 152 cm) 19th Century

# 75B SENNA

2'3" x 3' (69 cm x 91 cm) 19th Century

# 75C SENNA

1'10" x 3'2" (56 cm x 97 cm) 19th Century

This group of antique rugs typifies the variety of design to come from Senna, in northwestern Persia. Although Senna is not a large town, its weaving was at one time so well-known that the name Senna was given to Persian, as opposed to Turkish, knotting



methods. Colors preferred in Senna weaving were red, blue and gold, the red being a very distinctive tomato-orange shade, almost Central Asiatic in feeling. Some form of repeated pattern was usually employed, although Tabriz-like medallion designs are not uncommon, as in 75C. The designing can be unusually imaginative, as in the interlocking of paisley motifs in 75B. Although the discipline of the patterning is completely Persian in feeling, the strong yellow and orange tones show the Turkic roots of the culture of this northwestern section of Persia.

photos

#### 75 BIDJAR

11'9" x 15'2" (358 cm x 462 cm) 19th Century

This is a rug of traditional Kurd-Bidjar weaving. The terra-cotta red background is typical. The outer main light blue border depicts the turtle motif much used by Azerbaijan weavers. The many variations in color, especially in the terra-cotta field, reveal the problems of the weaver who could not get enough wool together at one time to dye it all at once.

#### 76 AFSHAR

4'4" x 5'10" (132 cm x 178 cm) Early 19th Century

An exquisite example of Turkic tribal weaving from southern Persia, with strong evidence of influence from Chinese Turkestan. The two blue vases supporting a conventionalized tree of life design is a motif much favored by the Afshar tribes south of Kerman. But the generous use of coral and yellow, and the Turkoman-like stripe of extra design beyond the last border, show the continuity of Central Asiatic taste.

#### 77 FEREGHAN

4'6" x 7' (137 cm x 213 cm) 19th Century

A touch of Turkic influence is felt in this rug even though it is woven in Persia. The whole rug has a strong orange cast with the yellow corners in bright contrast. The field pattern is the Persian *naksh-i mahi* or fish pattern.

#### 78 BIDJAR

4'9" x 7'5" (145 cm x 226 cm) Early 19th Century

This is an exquisite example of Turkic-speaking Afshar weaving from the vicinity of Bidjar. These Afshar weavers are far better craftsmen than those in Bidjar proper. Their work is finer, the detail more intricate. Sometimes their rugs are referred to within the country as *Halvahi* (sweet) Bidjars. This is a delightful treatment of reds and various shades of light blue.

from the collection of Dr. Wesley W. Washburn

#### 79 SAROUK

4'6" x 6'6" (137 cm x 198 cm) Early 19th Century

An exquisite example of the product of the small village of Sarouk. The center medallion fits into the rug gracefully. The ivory field is covered with rose branches. Although the craftsmanship is mature in every respect there is still a lingering touch of village childishness in the total design.

from the collection of Dr. Wesley W. Washburn

photo

#### 80 BACHTIARI

5'2" x 9' (157 cm x 274 cm) Early 19th Century

A rare example of Bachtuari weaving of the early 19th century highly influenced by the work of the Yalameh (Qashqai) tribal neighbors. Each tribe is Turkic-speaking, and both weave rugs with a strong affinity to Chinese Turkestan rugs in design and color. Like most nomadic weavers they enliven the background with small barnyard animals.

from the collection of Dr. Wesley W. Washburn

#### 81 KERMAN

5' x 7'6" (152 cm x 229 cm) 19th Century

A masterpiece of Kerman craftsmanship. Some obscure weaver has tied more than a half million knots to bring this rug to completion. The detail is sharp and clear. The colors are soft and beautifully blended. Apparently this skilled craftsman faced the same problems as most weavers do when all the wool is not dyed in one lot. The

light blue yarn he was using had to be replenished more than ten times. Each new dye-lot gave him a different shade of blue. In his last dye-lot he was most successful in achieving a deep blue. The treatment of the landscape, the gazelles, and the pheasants is delightfully imaginative.

from the John B. Gregorian Family Collection

## 82 HERIZ

15'8" x 28' (478 cm x 853 cm) 19th Century

A magnificent example of craftsmanship by isolated village folk who live in Persia's mountainous northwest. It must have been made for someone special. Very few houses in the Tabriz area have more than one story and the making of this rug would require a loom almost four stories tall. The design is geometrical in spirit, primitive in character. The wool for these rugs is from the sheep in the valley and the dyes are local. The ivory wool is used just as it comes from the sheep. Unfortunately, a border on both ends of the rug has been cut back to fit some New England room.

## 83 BIDJAR

8' x 11'7" (244 cm x 353 cm) 18th Century

The main pattern in this rug is one of the oldest Persian designs known, the weeping willow or tree of life. In Bachtuari land and Joshegan, as well as around Kerman, it is still in common use, but it is rarely found in Bidjars. Only a few very early Kurdish rugs in European museums show the use of this design in northwestern Persia. The design lends itself to use in primitive circumstances, since the weaver can repeat the motifs, row after row, with no thought at first how long the rug must be. At any time, as convenient, the rug may be finished and the whole will be symmetrical. The turtle border, favored by Kurdish weavers in Bidjar as well as by the weavers of Tabriz and Senna, has been employed to frame the design. Although the rug is virtually threadbare it is not only beautiful but strong enough to survive many more generations of use on the floor, a testimony to the hard wool and heavy weave of Bidjar.

from the John B. Gregorian Family Collection

photo

## 84 NAVAR YOMUD TURKOMAN

6'8" x 17'6" (203 cm x 533 cm) 18th Century

An example of Kilim, or flat-weave, by the Navar Turkoman tribe, a subgroup of the Yomuds. It is a rare and early example of their weaving, the strong colors much softened by time and use. Most recently in its long history it was being used in a mosque in the holy city of Meshed. As is commonly done, the piece was woven in several sections, joined after completion. The weaver tried to plan the stripes so they would later meet, but ran into difficulties as is so often the case. To bring the red lines together would have meant that the people would be facing in different directions, and ultimately the weaver was forced to compromise. The result is a pleasing arrangement, all the more charming for its childish simplicity. The consistency of workmanship throughout indicates one weaver only was involved.

## 85 MALAYIR SAROUK

13'9" x 22' (419 cm x 671 cm) 19th Century

It is rare that one can find a magnificent Sarouk of this size. Obviously it was woven for someone of rank or wealth. The jewel-like medallion on the open field gives the rug a striking richness. Like most rugs woven in this isolated village, there is an attempt to create a floral pattern, but the weaver's simple childishness comes through nevertheless.

## 86 QASHQAI

5'1" x 6'6" (155 cm x 198 cm) 19th Century

A colorful kilim or piece of flat-weave, made by Qashqai women to be used as a tent hanging or bed cover. The blue beads such as those which ornament this kilim are commonly used in Persia to help overcome the Evil Eye. The design is simple, with a primitive love for decoration, tassels and beads.

## 87 SARABAND

3'7" x 10'2" (109 cm x 310 cm) 19th Century

A very fine example of early 19th century Saraband weaving from the vicinity of Sultanabad. The *naksh-i badam* or almond design

is so extensively used by Saraband weavers that it has come to be known as the Saraband pattern. Soft terra-cotta reds set off the small motif which is further accented by touches of soft green. It has more borders than are commonly seen in Saraband rugs.

#### 88A BURSA PRAYER

4'1" x 6'2" (124 cm x 188 cm) 18th Century

The Byzantine city of Brusa was one of the Ottomans' first conquests, renamed Bursa it continued to be a center of importance in their empire. This magnificent example of 18th century court weaving was made in Bursa for some great person of wealth and importance. The round seal or emblem probably refers to the person for whom it was woven. The small tree motifs on either side of the central tree of life is an imaginative detail, and the golden cast to the color is typical of Turkish taste. This ambitious undertaking was given to some obscure Armenian woman, who at the base of the central prayer area has signed her name in Armenian, *Hena-zand*, meaning "obedient".

#### 88 KAZVIN

8'2" x 10'7" (249 cm x 323 cm) 19th Century

Few of the rugs called Kazvins are actually woven within the city of Kazvin. This is a rare example of true Kazvin craftsmanship, which ranks with the finest weaving done in Persia, in Keshan, Kerman or Tabriz. The background red comes from the henna plant, a color much used by the dyers in the Azerbaijan province. The dyer's skill and the superior wool used give the rug a glow equalled only by silk. The easily free-flowing semi-floral design is masterfully interwoven.

#### 89 KESHAN—SILK & SILVER

4'6" x 7'9" (137 cm x 236 cm) 19th Century

This early 19th century masterpiece is one of a kind, in craftsmanship and intricacy rivalled only by those 17th and 18th century carpets made of silk, silver and gold which were intended as gifts

between royalty. The embossed effect is created by two sculptured levels of silk contrasting with a flat-weave of silver-wrapped threads. The extreme tightness of the weave is more extraordinary when one realizes that the silver-wrapped strands could not have been easy to work with. Also in keeping with the exquisite craftsmanship is the choice of rich, subtle colors and the quality of the silk. Despite its age the rug glows with fresh color and cleanly etched patterning. The main border has as additional interest the miniature-like scenes of Persian palaces and gardens. An extremely choice and unusual rug.

*from the John B. Gregorian Family Collection*

*photo*

#### 90 TABRIZ PRAYER—SILK

4'6" x 6' (137 cm x 183 cm) 18th Century

An exquisite piece of weaving in silk from Tabriz. The weaver has chosen a large tree of life for the rug's central motif. The branches extend to fill the field. Similarly patterned rugs from Western Anatolia show the influence of Tabriz rugs such as this. The henna-dyed silk has aged to a soft rusty red, and the village simplicity of the design contrasts pleasingly with the rug's technical sophistication. Like most prayer rugs, this was woven from the top down, and the coloring at the "younger" end of the rug is noticeably stronger.

*from the John B. Gregorian Family Collection*

#### 91 TABRIZ PRAYER—SILK

4' x 5'3" (122 cm x 160 cm) 19th Century

A rare example of Tabriz weaving. The red field is much richer than one would expect to find in this area, although it is of henna origin. The light blue, softened with time, is indigenous to this area and is sometimes called "Tabriz Blue". The central prayer motif, with a hanging lantern and two candle stands, is a design much used in the old prayer rugs of Anatolia.

*from the John B. Gregorian Family Collection*



## 92 BACHTIARI

15'5" x 19'6" (470 cm x 594 cm) dated 1232 A.H.  
(about 1817 A.D.)

This large, beautifully preserved Bachtuari rug was woven to the order of the local ruler, inscribed and dated. The traditional garden design is worked on a large, bold scale with rich vivid colors. This pattern is called in Persian *khesht* or brick, since the panels are built up in rows like a decorative brick wall. Although the rug is more than 150 years old, most of its motifs are still current among today's weavers in Bachtuari land. The inscription reads: *Farmayesh-e Agha Nasr Gholi Khan Bachtuari*, or "at the order of lord Nasr Gholi, Khan of the Bachtuaris". Since the Bachtuari ruler at that time was virtual king of southwestern Persia, this rug was a royal possession, representing the finest possible workmanship, color and material. More than 150 years of use have left little impression on this magnificent carpet.

from the John B. Gregorian Family Collection

## 93 KHORASSAN

13'6" x 16'2" (411 cm x 493 cm) 18th Century

Khorassan is the extreme northeastern province of Persia, with its capitol at Meshed. The rugs called 'Khorassan' may be woven in any of a number of cities or villages. This example was probably woven in Nishapur, a city famous for its turquoise gemstones and for having been the home of Omar Khayyam. Khorassan rugs have a distinctive "ribbed" appearance on the back, since it is traditional to use a very heavy weft thread every fifth or sixth row. As they wear with age, this ribbing becomes noticeable on the front of the rug as well. The soft terra-cotta red is characteristic of rugs from Nishapur, while the blue is common to the entire province and is equally favored by the mosaic-workers whose ceramic tiles adorn the many mosques of Meshed. Khorassan rugs are reputed to have more borders than any other rug in the east.

## 94 BIRJAND

9'6" x 14' (290 cm x 427 cm) 19th Century

The rugs of Birjand, a town in northeastern Persia not far from

Meshed, closely resemble the finest rugs from Isfahan, Keshan and Tabriz. This example, classically fine, subtle in color and elegant in design was used for many years by a wealthy, prominent family in Herat, the principal city of Afghanistan just across the border from Meshed. The rug was inscribed by the Persian weaver who made it, then later an inventory number was woven into the inscription by the servants of the new owner. This rug is one of our most recent additions to our collection, purchased a few years ago in Afghanistan where for so long it had been a treasured possession. The soft, silky texture of the wool and the deep cast of the reds are both characteristic of rugs from Birjand. The inscription reads: *Pashm-baft shirkat-e Jafar-zadeh*, "woven in wool by the house of Jafar-zadeh".

## Wellesley A

### CAUCASIAN KILIM

4'9" x 12'8" 19th Century

This is an exceptionally fine example of flat-weaving from the Caucasus, showing a strong Turkic influence, especially in the wide white borders. Because the kilim was made with very fine technique and material it shows the ravages of time more than the coarser, canvas-like kilims of the same area. The extra bands of design at each end are similar in effect to the "apron" of design found on Turkoman rugs, but the repeated "s" motifs covering the field are typically Caucasian. This rug was made in several pieces on a narrow loom, and afterwards sewn together.

from the collection of Wellesley College

Gift of Agnes Abbot

## Wellesley B

### TABRIZ SILK

4' x 6' 19th Century

An exquisitely detailed example of weaving from Tabriz, subtle in color and perfect in calligraphy. As the major city in the important northwest Persian province of Azerbaijan, Tabriz has long been a center for the very best in arts and crafts, notably rug-weaving. This Tabriz compares favorably with the fine silk and

silver Keshan (no. 89), each exemplifying the extremes of intricacy and craftsmanship attained by weaving in Persia.

*from the collection of Wellesley College      Gift of Zeta Alpha Society*

## Wellesley C

### KONYA

5'5" x 7'7"      early 19th Century

It is interesting to compare this early Turkish prayer rug with the Caucasian Kilim described above (Wellesley A). It was woven in Konya, the Byzantine Iconium. Like the kilim, the Konya uses to advantage the "s" motif, and has the wide white borders classically associated with early Turkish textiles. (Note in particular the Anatolian rugs depicted by Holbein and his contemporaries.) Central Asiatic tones of orange-red and green are present, subdued by age but still lovely, and charmingly offset by the blues and ivories. There is an exceptional intricacy of design and the range of motifs in this rug. Parts of both ends are missing, and the edges are new.

*from the collection of Wellesley College*